

REMARKS

1. In the above-captioned Office Action, the Examiner objected to claims 8, 10, 16, 19, and 26. The Examiner objected to the drawings. The Examiner objected to claims 1-28 for informalities. Claims 21-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) in view of Highlen et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,570,910). Claims 1-7, 9, 11-15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, and 27, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) in view of Morisson (U.S. Patent No. 5,934,709). Claims 1-4, 7, 11, 14, 15, 17, and 20, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) in view of Watanabe (U.S. Patent No. 6,668,655). Claims 25 and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) given Highlen in view of Karl et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,553,895). Claim 22 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) given Morisson in view of Highlen. These rejections and objections are traversed and reconsideration is hereby respectfully requested.

2. The Examiner objected to the drawings stating that FIG. 2 should include reference numerals 111 and 113 pursuant to paragraph [0016] of the specification. Paragraph [0016] is amended above.

3. Claims 1-28 were objected to for Informalities.

With respect to claim 1, lines 4-6 and claim 11, line 9, claims 1 and 11 are amended above.

With respect to claim 9, line 2 and claim 18, line 2, claims 9 and 18 are amended above.

With respect to claim 1, lines 11-12, the Examiner states that the phrase "operably engages" is awkward and confusing. The phrase "operably engaging," as set forth in claim 1, is clear and is set forth in the specification and drawings (see, e.g., paragraphs 17 through 19). The phrase "operably engaging" is found in the claims of 742 issued patents, and over 1900 patents include "operably" with engage, engages, engaged, or engaging, thus the phrase itself is well-utilized. The Applicants have the right to select the words utilized in their claims.

With respect to claim 2, line 3, the Examiner states that "applied" should be replaced with "applied." Upon review of the Applicant's specification, including a review of the document stored on the PAIR website, the word "applied" is already present in claim 2, line 3, and "applied" is nowhere to be found. Thus, no change is made.

With respect to claim 4, lines 1-3; claim 11, line 6, and lines 11-12; claim 21, lines 7-8 and 15-16, the Examiner states that the "disposed near" language is "awkward, misleading, and arguably inaccurate." The language used in these claims is clear and unambiguous. The relationship of features listed in the claims is clearly set forth in the specification (see, e.g., paragraph 19) and shown in the drawings, and is not awkward, misleading, or inaccurate. If the Examiner has an explicit objection or rejection, the Applicant would appreciate a detailed explanation as to how the language is awkward, misleading, and inaccurate.

The Examiner has objected to claims 1-28 for informalities. The Examiner has only "detailed" informalities for claims 1, 2, 4, 9, 11, 18, and 21. The Applicant responds under the presumption that there are no informalities for claims 3, 5-8, 10, 12-17, 19, 20, and 22-28 because no reasons are detailed by the Examiner.

4. Claims 21-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) in view of Highlen. Claims 25 and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) given Highlen in view of Karl.

Highlen's release sleeve 33, as stated by the Examiner, is "affixed about the male member so as not to easily be dislodged therefrom." This description by the Examiner, in addition to the text and figures of Highlen, shows that Highlen's release sleeve not only is retained with the male member of Highlen's connector at all times, but shows how Highlen's release sleeve 33 is not retainable with the female member because the structures shown by Highlen prevent the release sleeve 33 from being retained with the female member. Highlen makes no teaching or suggestion how to modify his device to function as described and to retain the release sleeve 33 with the female member. Thus, Highlen fails to teach or suggest that *the release collar is retainable on the female member when the male member and the female member are not engaged*, as set forth in Independent claim 21 as amended above. Thus, claims 21-25 and 28 are shown to be allowable over Highlen and/or Karl.

5. Claims 1-7, 9, 11-15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, and 27, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) in view of Morisson. Claim 22 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) given Morisson in view of Highlen. Prior to discussing the merits of the Examiner's position, the applicant believes it would be helpful to first briefly describe and characterize the Morisson reference.

THE MORISSON REFERENCE

As stated in Morisson:

The male coupling body 4 further includes an outer circumferential surface 12, generally configured for sliding mating contact within the female coupling member 3 ... [Column 5, lines 20-23]

[T]he retaining surface 21 and the side surface 22 of each locking segment 16 are adapted for sliding contact with either or both of the side faces 22, 25 respectively, of the recess 15 [Column 5, lines 42-45].

[T]he inner sleeve portion 36 extends co-axially between the interconnected coupling members 2, 3 [Column 6, lines 27-28].

Morisson therefore describes an inner sleeve 36 that is intended for co-axial motion and continuous sliding contact between the male and female members and as shown in his figures. The sleeve 36 moves and releases each locking segment 16 without expanding. The description and the drawings show no need, nor provide space, for the sleeve to expand radially or otherwise. Morisson, therefore, teaches a sleeve that releases without expanding. Thus, Morisson does not teach or suggest that *the second axial end of the actuator is radially expandable within an (the) actuator cavity*, as set forth in independent claims 1 and 21, nor that *at least part of the actuator is expandable*, as set forth in independent claim 11 as amended above. Therefore, claims 1-7, 9, 11-15, 17-18, 20-24, and 27 are shown to be allowable over Morisson.

6. Claims 1-4, 7, 11, 14, 15, 17, and 20, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) in view of Watanabe. Prior to discussing the merits of the Examiner's position, the applicant believes it would be helpful to first briefly describe and characterize the Watanabe reference.

Watanabe shows in FIG. 11 that when the couplings are disengaged, a releasing jig is engaged on the male portion of the coupling. Watanabe, therefore, describes a releasable coupling that has a coupling collar engaged on a male coupling when the male coupling is disengaged from the female coupling, and does not describe *wherein the release collar is disposed on the female member when the male member and the female member are not engaged*, as set forth in independent claims 1 and 11 as amended above. Thus, claims 1-4, 7, 11, 14, 15, 17, and 20 are shown to be allowable over Watanabe.

7. Thus, none of the references cited, alone or in combination, teach the subject matter of the independent claims. Hence, the applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 1, 11, and 21 may be passed to allowance. Furthermore, claims 2-10, 12-20, and 22-28 are dependent upon an independent claim that is shown to be allowable. For all these reasons, the dependent claims are themselves allowable.

8. No new subject matter is introduced by the amendments to the above claims or the specification.

9. The above amendment and response is necessary because it places the application in condition for allowance and was not previously entered because the Examiner first brought the grounds of rejection in the Final Office Action.

10. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone or facsimile if the Examiner believes that such a communication may advance the prosecution of the present application. Notice of allowance of claims 1-28 is hereby respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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